

FAIRLESS OLIVE
BY REEMA ISLAM



'Tis the season

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour”
— Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol

IMAGINE a dish with beef, mutton, raisins and prunes, eaten in a porridge like state and known as frumenty. Come the reign of King George I and in 1714, this gruel is reinvented as the traditional Christmas pudding we have so come to associate an English Christmas with. With Charles Dickens and Enid Blyton painting these vivid images of a Christmas in our minds we instantly recognise the plum-coloured, dome-shaped food with a sprig on top and some cherries. Yet, this famous dish is now eaten as a dessert to end the annual Christmas meal, but initially was a mixture of sweets and savouries.

Much like our traditional Jorda which is actually a rehashed form of muttanjan, a merry mix of meats and sweets and the orange-coloured jorda rice, food in the past definitely sounds like it was intentionally meant to confuse the palate!

Amidst the heart breaking world events that took place over the last few weeks, I

pray the year ends positively and wish all my readers a very Merry Christmas!

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

A coin is often placed inside the pudding for good luck and the sprig of holly on top in not just a sign of good luck but a symbol of the crown of thorns Jesus wore. Most recipes follow the 13 ingredient mark, where the number signifies Jesus and his companions of the last supper.

Ingredients:

1 cup raisins
1 cup self-raising flour
½ cup pure ghee (clarified butter)
1 cup fresh brown breadcrumbs (from around 4 thick slices of bread)
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup mixed nuts, chopped (cashew, almonds, pistachios etc)
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp mixed spices (nutmeg, cloves, fennel seeds or saunf)
1 cup milk
1 large egg
Butter, for greasing
For the butterscotch sauce -
50g butter
100g brown sugar



200g thickened milk (boil the milk excessively to reduce it into a thick creaminess)

1 tbsp lemon or orange zest

Method:

Mix the flour, ghee, nuts, sugar, then stir in the milk and egg. Once well combined, pour this into a buttered pudding bowl.

Cover with a double layer of buttered foil, leaving some space in the centre for pudding to rise. Tie the foil securely with string, then place in a steamer or large pan containing enough, gently simmering water to come halfway up the sides of the bowl.

Steam, covered with a lid, for 2-2½ hours. Check the water level during cooking, re-filling up if necessary.

For the sauce, heat everything in a pan and bring slowly to the boil, stirring. Allow to bubble away for 2-3 minutes, still stirring, until the sugar has dissolved and the sauce is pale caramel in colour and slightly thickened.

Serving:

Invert the pudding onto a serving plate and pour the hot butterscotch sauce over it.

Quickly place some chopped nuts on top and add a sprig of mint or sweet basil to symbolise the missing holly!

To add some fun to this traditional dish, remember to insert either:

A button, and if a single male finds it, he will remain a bachelor until next Christmas!

A thimble, so if a single female finds it she will remain a spinster until next Christmas!

A ring, so if a single person finds it, he/she will be married before next Christmas!

ROAST DUCK

Hu Sihui, was an inspector of the imperial kitchens of the Yuan dynasty in China, during the 12th and 13th centuries (CE). He sits comfortably in the annals of history books for having written the Complete Recipes for Dishes and Beverages, where the Roast Duck or better known as Peking Duck today, holds high significance. Widely considered a Chinese delicacy all over the world, this traditional Christmas recipe, during the Jiajing reign (1522-1566), the first restaurant to sell this delectable duck was called Old Bianyifang Restaurant, where they roasted their ducks with radiant heat. The walls of the oven were first heated with sorghum stalks then the duck was placed inside and cooked by the heat given off by the walls. Such a roasted duck is crispy and golden brown.

Ingredients:

1 (4 pound) whole duck, dressed
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground ginger
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
¼ tsp ground white pepper
1/8 tsp ground cloves
3 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp honey
1 orange, sliced in rounds

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